

National County Government Week '08

Association of County Commissions of Alabama

National Association of Counties



What is National County Government Week (April 6-12)?

First celebrated in 1991, **National County Government Week** was created to raise public awareness and better understanding about the roles and responsibilities of our nation's counties. The activities held during this week, sponsored by local governments, should be designed to help local citizens better understand how their counties can respond to their needs. In many ways, this special week is an introduction for county residents to their local government and its services.

How can your county get involved?

Inside this packet are several easy-to-do ideas to help your county get involved with National County Government Week. The National Association of Counties has set the national theme for this year as "Protecting Our Children." During this week, counties have the opportunity to show their residents the many ways they work to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of their youngest residents using sensible, cost-effective programs.

You can hold an "open house" to allow school children to tour government facilities; county officials can visit schools and guest lecture during Civics and Government classes; invite a representative from the Department of Children's Affairs, United Way or other local volunteer groups that your county commission supports to do a presentation during a commission meeting...all in the name of protecting Alabama's children.

However, we at ACCA realize that only few of Alabama's counties may sponsor programs specific to this national theme. This by no means should keep you on the sidelines during this special week highlighting the outstanding programs that you do for the safety and welfare of your county!

There are many more ideas inside this packet to help get your started and help you manage the media attention.

NCGW will help raise public awareness and better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of your county.

How will participating in National County Government Week help YOU?

By participating in National County Government Week, you and your fellow county leaders will be helping to elevate the public identity of local government in your community. Most local residents don't often see government as doing good deeds for its residents, but instead they see government as the entity that raises taxes or refuses to pave a road. This is the perfect opportunity for you to show your residents, and your local media, the good that government does.

What are some ideas for projects during National County Government Week?

- Perhaps the first thing to do is to enact a resolution during a county commission meeting proclaiming **April 6-12, 2008**, County Government Week in your county. By this simple resolution, you will be setting the stage for other events throughout the week. For your convenience, a sample resolution is included in this packet.
- The national theme this year is "Protecting Our Children," so show your citizens what county government is doing to fulfill that ideal. Reach out to local children's organizations, the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs, local police departments, local office of the Department of Human Resources, or any local child-oriented group, and invite them to make a presentation at an open-to-the-public county commission meeting. Make sure that the meeting is well-publicized in advance.
- Speak to Civic or Government classes about the importance of local government and public service. Bring along the necessary information to register all-of-age students to vote. After all, this is an election year, and you can help introduce the students to the electoral process.
- Speak to civic groups, such as Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary, about what county government is doing for its citizens. For example, these topics are all newsworthy and great ideas for public discussion:
 - What is your county doing to keep motorists safe on county highways and bridges?
 - Does your county have any programs for litter control?
 - Does your county sponsor drug awareness or prevention programs?
 - Does your county have any economic development programs for businesses?
 - Has your county renovated any local parks or recreation centers?
 - Does your county have any programs for elderly citizens?



When you are planning your events for the week, think about the news value of the events. It's important to get the word out to your local media about what you are doing to promote your county programs.

How can you get positive media coverage?



When good government does good work, it should be recognized. But, sometimes, the media may need a little help getting involved. That means either a press release or a phone call to your local news outlet.

Keep reporters who cover your local government informed about National County Government Week and the events you have planned. Let them know that this is a week of events taking place nationwide and that other counties in Alabama are participating as well.

Make sure your events have news value, particularly that the programs you have chosen affect your communities in a positive way, and your local media outlets will attend. When they do, be prepared to discuss what your county is doing during National County Government Week.

Timeline for County Government Week...

- Before you can get started, choose which program(s) you would like to highlight during County Government Week. **SELECT PROGRAM(S) BY MARCH 10.**
- Contact Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary Club leaders about speaking during the meeting scheduled during for the week of April 6-12. **CONTACT CLUB LEADERS BY MARCH 10 TO BE ON THE AGENDA.**
- Contact local schools, particularly junior high and high school principals, about the possibility of guest lecturing to students in Civics (7th grade) and Government (12th grade) classes. **CONTACT PRINCIPALS BY MID-MARCH.**
- Once you have chosen your program(s), you should choose how you would like to spotlight them during County Government Week. Do you want to hold a press conference? Do you need to have a walking tour? Do you need handouts? **SELECT METHOD BY MARCH 17.**
- Next, you should inform your local media about County Government Week and your county's activities. The easiest way to do this is with a press release detailing information about your activities during the week and some history about the week. For your convenience, a sample press release is included in this packet. **ISSUE PRESS RELEASE TO MEDIA NO LATER THAN APRIL 1.**
- Because National County Government Week is **April 6-12, 2008**, the first official and public thing to do is to enact a resolution during a county commission meeting proclaiming that week County Government Week in your county. For your convenience, a sample is included in this packet. **BE SURE TO INVITE YOUR LOCAL MEDIA TO THIS COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING, AND MAKE SURE THE RESOLUTION IS SIGNED DURING THE COMMISSION MEETING BEFORE COUNTY GOVERNMENT WEEK.**

Having the media cover your events can help change how local government is perceived by your residents.

A few tips about the media...

- As an added initiative to remind your media representatives to attend your events, call your contacts either one to two days before the event. It is entirely appropriate to call your local newspaper or television station a day or two before an event to remind an assignments editor or reporter about an event that you are coordinating. However, don't go overboard with the reminders.
- Be prepared to answer questions from the media during your event. If possible, create handouts with information that the reporter can use in a story about your event. For example, if you are hosting the reopening of a public park that was once run down and the county reclaimed, cleaned, built a playground and picnic pavilion...all using donated funds...briefly explain how the county received the money, how much, and the process the county went through to build the park in your flyer.
- It's very important that you take a camera with you to your event. There will always be the possibility that the media may not attend. If that's the case, you, then, ARE the reporter. Take plenty of photos and submit your own story to your local newspaper. Local newspapers, especially weekly newspapers, are often short staffed. So, if you are willing to go the extra mile and tell the story yourself, chances are very good that your story may appear in the pages of your paper's next edition.
- If you have any questions or need help, please call Lori Quiller, director of public relations, at (334) 263-7594.



Remember...you are helping to tell the story for your county, and good government doing good work deserves good press!

Sample Resolution

National County Government Week

April 6-12, 2008

WHEREAS, Alabama’s 67 counties provide a variety of essential public services to communities and take seriously their responsibility to protect and enhance the health, safety and welfare of our citizens in sensible and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, many of Alabama’s local government initiatives directly touch the lives of Alabama’s citizens on a daily basis, but many residents do not realize the impact of many of local government programs; and

WHEREAS, the _____ County Commission has a duty to find and provide value-added services to all its local residents; and

WHEREAS, the _____ County Commission provides not only essential services to its _____ county residents, but also programs such as road and bridge programs for the safety of our motorists; litter control for the beautification of our county; economic development programs for the growth of our community; education and welfare programs for our elderly citizens; drug awareness and prevention programs for the health of our citizens; and parks and recreation programs for the enjoyment of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, National County Government Week has been celebrated since 1991 to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the nation’s counties to meet the needs of the community; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the _____ County Commission declare County Government Week in _____ County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be spread upon the minutes of the _____, 2008, meeting of the _____ County Commission, and be immediately forwarded to the Association of County Commissions of Alabama,

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the _____ County Commission has caused this Resolution to be executed in its name and on behalf by its Chairman on this the _____ day of _____, 2008.

Chairman, _____ County Commission

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: _____ (____) _____

Date: _____

E-MAIL: _____

_____ **County Celebrates National County Government Week**

Each year, local governments across the nation celebrate National County Government Week as a way to raise public awareness and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of county government.

The _____ County Commission has several events planned the week of **April 6-12** to celebrate National County Government Week, focusing on the many public services that the county commission provides to its citizens.

“National County Government Week is the perfect opportunity for our citizens to get to know what county government really does for its citizens,” said County Commission Chairman _____. “Unfortunately, many of our residents only think about the one aspect of county government that most often touches their life, but the county provides services and program that contribute to the quality of life in our community, safety of all our citizens and the economic growth of the county.”

The week will kick off during the regular county commission meeting on _____ when the county commissioners sign a resolution declaring County Government Week in _____ County. On _____ Chairman _____ will lead a tour of the recently renovated parks and recreation center, and on _____ the commission will sponsor a walking tour of the revitalized economic district downtown where local business leaders will join in a discussion of the county’s new economic development programs.

“Our county has so much to offer to our residents, and we want to show our residents that their leaders are here for them,” Chairman _____ said.

National County Government Week was created in 1991 by the National Association of Counties. There are activities at the national, state and local levels during this week with more than 1,000 counties participating annually.

For more information about County Government Week and _____ County’s activities during the week of April 6-12, please contact _____ at (____) _____.